



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 4, Issue 1

November 2013

Feds Feed Families 2013: USDA Employees Responsible for Nearly Half of Government's Total Donations



After three months, the Feds Feed Families Campaign ended in August with a total of 8.9 million pounds of donated food items. That is an all-time high. Of that amount,

USDA employees alone contributed 4.3 million pounds, far surpassing all other Federal departments and agencies. The Department of Defense contributed the second highest amount government-wide at 1.9 million pounds.

Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden (pictured right) addressed employees and partner agencies at the 2013 Feds Feed Families closing ceremony on November 13th. She thanked the 39 USDA offices, agencies, and networks that participated in this year's campaign.



Within USDA, a partnership with the [Mid Atlantic Gleaning Network](#) allowed USDA employees to gather 2.8 million pounds of food. USDA's other largest contributors were: the USDA People's Garden Initiative with 413,848 pounds; the Natural Resources Conservation Service with 224,819 pounds; the USDA Gleaning Activities network (through the People's Garden) with 185,434 pounds; and the Farm Service Agency with 151,786 pounds.

The USDA Feds Feed Families initiative was led by Douglas Keeler (pictured left), who also spoke at the closing ceremony. Keeler is Associate Deputy Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Livestock, Poultry and Seed Division.



USDA Photos by Bob Nichols

You can contact MyUSDA by emailing MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony December 11

By Anna Johnson-Yeargins

The 65th Annual Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony is fast approaching! The Office of Human Resources Management cordially invites all agencies and staff offices to attend this year's ceremony on December 11, 2013, to honor our colleagues and celebrate their accomplishments which have contributed to and support the overall mission and goals of USDA.

The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize the highest level of employee achievement, making it the most prestigious awards presented by the Department. Employees at all grade levels are eligible for recognition. This year's theme is "Serving a Modern, Innovative, and Inspiring Rural America." The 2013 Honor Award categories reflect the Secretary's key priorities:

- Enhancing the Economic Vitality and Quality of Life in Rural America
- Protecting Natural Resources
- Increasing Global Food Security
- Ensuring Access to Safe and Nutritious Food
- Management Excellence
- Personal and Professional Excellence
- Support Service
- Heroism and Emergency Response
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Labor-Management Collaboration
- Innovative Customer Service

Please join us in recognizing this year's honorees. The ceremony will be held on Wednesday, December 11, 2013, at 11:00 am, in the Jefferson Auditorium, with a reception to follow on the Whitten Patio.



Calling All USDA Veterans!

Are you a USDA Veteran?

We want YOU to join the new USDA VEO community! If you are interested in joining forces with other fellow veterans focusing on workplace issues to strengthen ties across many initiatives, please send us an email expressing interest and we will be happy to add you to our list-serv: worklife@dm.usda.gov

'Tis the Season to Telework

Are you "Telework ready"?
Don't let inclement weather catch you off guard. Be prepared and complete your Telework Agreement Form Today!



Be sure to code your time spent Teleworking correctly.
Questions? Contact: telework@dm.usda.gov

USDA Sweeps Awards at National Image Conference

By Jacqueline Padrón Over 30 USDA employees recently participated in the National Training Program sponsored by National Image, Inc., FEDQ (a national Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender affinity group), and Federal Employees with Disabilities (FEDs.) The program offered excellent training, exhibits, and a career fair, and it was an opportunity to provide up to 600 students with information on USDA scholarships and internships.



Left: Jacqueline Padrón (DM/OHRM) accepted the Partnership Award on behalf of USDA; Sylvia Chavez-Metoyer, Chair & CEO National Image Inc.; and Pedro Nieto (FS) received the HEPM Equity and Excellence Award.

In conjunction with the National Training Programs, USDA held a free Pre-conference Forum that gave employees an opportunity to network with USDA colleagues and learn about effective approaches to address recruitment, career development, mentoring, and retention of diverse talent.

Max Finberg, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Chair of the Office of Cultural Transformation, briefed participants on Cultural Transformation. Roderick Mance, Mentoring Program Manager, USDA Virtual University/Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), briefed participants on the Department's mentoring program.



USDA employees attending the USDA Pre-Conference Forum participated in training opportunities, served as presenters, staffed the USDA exhibit booth and provided attendees with recruitment and program-related information.

Jacqueline Padrón with DM/OHRM talked about the status of Hispanic representation within the USDA workforce and the challenges USDA faces with recruiting and retaining Hispanic employees. Participants also heard from Jon Hall, Acting Director Civil Rights, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Dr. Irma Lawrence, National Program Manager, Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA); and Alicia Rodriguez, Senior Training Coordinator, Training Division, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, as they shared tips on navigating your career.

USDA was recognized for its outstanding partnership with National Image; Jacqueline Padrón, DM/OHRM, USDA's Hispanic Employment Program Manager (HEPM), received the "Woman of the Year" award and Pedro Nieto, US Forest Service, received the "HEPM Equity and Excellence Award."

One of the National Training highlights was General Counsel Ramona Romero's keynote speech during the "Women in Action" session where she received a standing ovation. She shared her amazing personal story with the audience and said that, "If my story says anything at all, it's that everything is possible. There are no insurmountable limits to what we can achieve as individuals and as a people except for those we impose on ourselves."

These important partnerships with Image, FEDQ, and FEDs is one way we are addressing a core goal of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation initiative, which is to recruit, hire, retain, and promote a diverse workforce that looks like a reflection of the American public. For more information, contact Jacqueline Padrón, Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager, at jacqueline.padron@dm.usda.gov or Perry Stevens, LGBT SEPM, at perry.stevens@dm.usda.gov.



Image's "Women of Action" morning session

Left: Ron Brown, RMA HEPM; Olga Morales, FSIS HEPM; Pete Nieto, FS HEPM; Ramona Romero, General Counsel, Keynote Speaker; Jacqueline Padrón, USDA HEPM, "Woman of the Year" award recipient; Patricia Jackman, LGBT SEPM; and Samantha Marin, APHIS HEPM.

USDA Wellness Champions Step It Up

By Debra Arnold As USDA continues to promote a healthier work force through the "12 Steps to Wellness" campaign, we would like to take the time to recognize a few employees who are talking the talk and walking the walk, er... run.

"I was 283 pounds, 5ft 3in, and a 44 year old widow with health issues. Wearing size 22, my doctor informed me if I didn't lose weight, I would be put on more daily prescribed medications. With a family history of high blood pressure and diabetes, a change was needed. Three years later, I am a size 14/16, I exercise daily and eat smaller/healthier portions and no added medications!" –Deidre Bryant, Office of the Chief Economist

"The Marathon was super great! I had such a good time and felt really strong throughout. I already want to do it again! Hopefully I will get another chance." - NYC Marine Corps Marathon runner, Tanya Robles, Natural Resources Conservation Service

Dora Flores, Agricultural Research Service, recently ran in the 38th Annual D.C. Marine Corps Marathon. The Marine Corps Marathon is the fourth largest race in the United States and the ninth biggest in the world. Congratulations Dora!

There is no shortage of champions at USDA!
Send us your story of personal journey into wellness by emailing wellness@dm.usda.gov.

In Partnership with:

October 24, 2013

**How Work Flexibility can Help You
be Your Best On and Off The Job**



Cali Yost

Access Now



Mika Cross

Learn How Work Flexibility Can Help You Be Your Best On and Off the Job

If you missed last month's webinar with USDA's Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager and acclaimed author, Cali Williams Yost, you can access the archived version from the link below: <http://www.tmgov.org/tmgov/courses>

Food and Nutrition Service Committed to Cultural Transformation

By Susan Siemietkowski

A group of employees from the Alexandria, Virginia, headquarters office of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) spent several hours volunteering recently at the Columbia Heights Educational Campus in Washington, DC. They prepared beds and planted herbs, greens, garlic, and other foods on the school's property. In addition to fostering teamwork and camaraderie among employees, such engagement by employees helps advance one of First Lady Michelle Obama's priority initiatives and promotes Cultural Transformation. FNS employees who participated included Anne Fiala, Sonya Barnes and Sheldon Gordon (back row) and Mydina Thabet and Traci Mouw (front row). Additional information on the People's Garden is available through the following link: <https://twitter.com/PeoplesGarden>.



The Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (MARO) of USDA's FNS, in Robbinsville, New Jersey, recently organized a special event to mark Hispanic Heritage Month and support Cultural Transformation. These events provide colleagues the opportunity to learn about and appreciate each other -- which promotes a higher performing organization.



USDA “Shining Supervisors”!

By Debra Arnold



The stars don't just come out at night! Meet two of our brightest stars right within our reach!

Joe Moore, Supervisory Marketing Specialist at GIPSA in Atlanta, Georgia, is a superb and astute supervisor who motivates and helps employees meet quality performance standards while building excellent employee morale. Joe exhibits an understanding of and appreciation for the virtues of achieving a work/life balance. He proactively assists employees in maintaining high quality work through Telework and alternative work schedules.

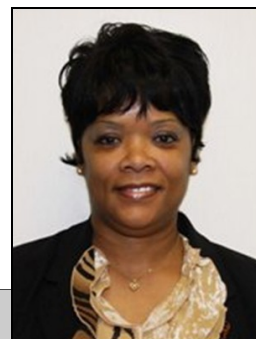
Joe's wisdom and skills as a supervisor have provided employees with a front-row view of what true leadership looks like. Joe is a shining example to his employees and other supervisors of how important workplace flexibilities are in maintaining high-quality work standards and work/life balance!

Joe W. Moore, Supervisory Marketing Specialist MRP/GIPSA, Eastern Regional Office, Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP), Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), Eastern Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia.

Carlean Horton wears many hats as a supervisor! What places her above the rest and makes her shine, is her desire to go above and beyond the norm to understand employees. She always considers personal circumstances and takes them into account when assigning and evaluating work performance and responsibilities.

One of many examples where Ms. Horton has accommodated employees is when one expectant mother of four was approved to telework intermittently while dealing with medical issues surrounding her pregnancy. This enabled the employee to continue providing quality work for the agency, while in a safe environment. We all know how challenging it can be to stay abreast of workloads much less playing months worth of catch up. A true win-win for all!

Carlean Horton, Administrative Officer, Research, Education and Economics (REE), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Stoneville, Mississippi.



USDA Training Young People With Disabilities for Future Employment

By Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman

USDA and the Department of the Interior (DOI) have partnered to place 1-2 students (at no cost) in USDA offices located in the Denver, Colorado, area by January 2014.

Project SEARCH is an innovative program that partners businesses with education and adult support services in training individuals with disabilities for future employment. In addition to the Denver Federal Center (DFC), Colorado presently has Project SEARCH sites at Boulder Community Hospital, Colorado Children's Hospital, and Columbine Health Systems. Project SEARCH provides career exploration work experiences that are designed to teach competitive, marketable, transferable job skills. Participants work for up to five hours a day for a period of up to 14-weeks. All participants are also eligible for Federal employment under Schedule A.

Departmental Management will continue to coordinate a centralized USDA-wide effort to provide Project SEARCH student interns aged 18 -22 currently to locations in Metro DC and Denver Federal Center areas only.

If any Mission Areas, Agencies and/or Staff Offices are interested in being a future host employer, please contact USDA Project SEARCH's Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman at students@dm.usda.gov.



DRWD personnel Roseal Fowlkes (left) and Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman (right) meeting Project SEARCH students that are taking classes and working on assignments in Denver.

USDA Virtual University Launches New Employee Development Resources

By Rod Mance

The USDA Virtual University recently launched three new employee development resources. They include the Mentoring Portal, the Aspiring Leader Program (ALP), and the Leadership Essentials Certificate Program (LECP). These resources were developed for use USDA-wide through the Training Officers Consortium.

The **Mentoring Portal** is used to match mentors and protégés. Mentoring is an important employee development tool that helps build employee skills and transfers knowledge. You can access the Portal at <http://www.eservices.usda.gov/usdamentoring/> to sign up to serve as a mentor or a protégé.

The **Aspiring Leader Program (ALP)** is designed to develop foundational leadership competencies. The program is targeted for employees at the GS-9/12 levels, and is open to employees with a desire to pursue leadership. The 8-10 hour program is designed to develop these competencies: customer service; decisiveness; influencing/negotiating; team building; accountability; and conflict management. Employees also spend time shadowing several leaders. To learn more about this opportunity, please visit the Virtual University's USDA Aspiring Leaders Program web site at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/alp.htm>.

The **Leadership Essentials Certificate Program (LECP)** is designed for employees who are currently in roles that require advanced leadership skills, such as team leader, supervisor, or manager who want to enhance or expand their leadership skills at the GS-13/15 levels. The LECP includes self assessment, mentoring, 12-18 hours of on line courses, reading 2 leadership books from AgLearn's Books 24X7, and participation in a 1-2 hour leadership webinar. This will take place across an estimated eight-month period. More information about the LECP can be found at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/lecp.htm>.

The programs are part of our overall effort to build a diverse and high performing workforce at USDA. There is no cost to participate in these programs. Employees can begin as soon as they have their supervisor's approval. The programs were built to be flexible, easy to access, and no cost to encourage broad participation. Agencies and offices can use these programs as part of their overall succession planning efforts. If you have any questions, please contact the Program Manager, Rod Mance, at roderick.mance@dm.usda.gov.

Forest Service Region 8: Vets in Fire Program

By Deidre W. Smith

In an effort to meet the President's agenda to hire more veterans, the US Forest Service Region 8 Fire and Aviation Management and Civil Rights Division hosted eight veterans to participate in the Vets in Fire Program. Participants were hired under the Veteran Recruitment Authority, a non-competitive hiring authority designed to allow managers to hire eligible veterans without the normal competitive process.

The goal of the Vets in Fire Program is to provide the participants with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to compete for entry level firefighter positions. Participants spent two weeks at the Ocala National Forest receiving basic firefighter training and CPR/First Aid certifications. Then they joined Region 8 units, which included North Carolina, Virginia, Oklahoma, and Florida for eight weeks of on-the-job training. The 2013 class had representation from the Navy, Air Force, Army, and Marines.

"I hope that by participating in the program I will have a more in-depth knowledge of how the Forest Service uses fire," said Joseph Loudermilk.

"I am glad to see this program continue. It gives individuals who have served our country the opportunity to have a chance to join a great organization like the Forest Service," said Forest Service retiree Ted Willis.



Back L-R Ted Willis, Joseph Loudermilk, Bobby Vaughn, Tim Pertrain, Eric Thompson and Deidre Smith. Front L-R Micah Walden, Willie Gibson, Jr and David Pennington.

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for December submissions is Tuesday, December 3, 2013.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue with an accompanying photo. Send photos as separate attachments and make sure they are high quality. **The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it. Maximum length of articles is 250 words.**

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.